

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 195 850

CE 027 615

AUTHOR Geering, Adrian D.
 TITLE Organization Theory and Its Application to Adult Education.
 INSTITUTION Adelaide Coll. of the Arts and Education (Australia).
 PUB DATE Aug 80
 NOTE 35p.
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS *Adult Education; Adults; Agency Role; *Bureaucracy; Definitions; Environment; History; Institutional Environment; Institutions; Literature Reviews; Organizational Climate; *Organizational Theories; *Organizations (Groups); Role Conflict; *Social Science Research; Trend Analysis

ABSTRACT

This paper surveys the field of organization theory and its application to adult education agencies. The paper first defines organization theory (the study of the structure and functioning of organizations and the behavior of groups and individuals within them), and discusses its historical development. It then presents four emerging trends of organization theory. After considering the application of organization theory to adult education, the paper concludes with a perspective on such applications. (KC)

 * Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
 * from the original document. *

ED195850

CE

ORGANIZATION THEORY AND
ITS APPLICATION TO ADULT EDUCATION

ADRIAN D. GEERING, Ph.D.
ADELAIDE COLLEGE OF THE ARTS AND EDUCATION
AUSTRALIA

August, 1980

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Adrian Geering

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CE 027 615

SYNOPSIS:

This paper surveys the field of organization theory and its application to adult education agencies.

First, organization theory is defined.

Second, the historical development of organization theory is discussed.

Third, four emerging trends of organization theory are presented.

Fourth, the application of organization theory to adult education is considered.

Last, some concluding comments are made.

1. INTRODUCTION

Pugh, in an excellent article, defines organization theory as follows:

Organization theory is the study of the structure and functioning of organizations and the behavior of groups and individuals within them. It is an emerging interdisciplinary quasi-independent science, drawing primarily on the disciplines of psychology and sociology but also on economics, and to a lesser extent on production engineering.¹

An organization contains a formal structure and a formal process (viz. administration) which includes such activities as communication, decision-making, leadership, supervision, evaluation and allocation of roles, resources and facilities. It also contains an informal structure and an informal process, involving such things as activities of organization members and a specific pattern of values, goals and norms, all of which are not formally prescribed. Thus administration is a sub-system of an organization.

The term "organizational theory" is a generic term which applies to all theories that have reference to some aspect of a complex organization. Whereas, the term "administrative theory" refers to any theory which focuses on the administrative dimension of an organization and will therefore be subsumed under the general notion of organizational theory. Thus, for the purposes of this paper the writer will regard "organization theory" and "administrative theory" as synonymous terms, fully realizing that if the latter is to be accepted as such, then it must be seen to focus upon the relationship between the administrative process and the formal and informal

¹D. S. Pugh, "Modern Organization Theory: A Psychological and Sociological Study," Psychological Bulletin, 66:4 (1966), 235-251.

structures and processes and the suprasystem or environment of the organization itself.

2. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY

Historically three perspectives of thought in organization theory can be discerned, viz. "classical" management theory, the "human relations" approach and the "structuralist" approach. These three schools of thought: differ in their view of organizations; suggest different conceptions of Man and society; and emphasize different goals.

Classical Theory or Scientific Management marked the beginning of systematic knowledge of organizational theory. The major pioneers of this approach were F. W. Taylor, H. Fayol, Gulick and Urwick, and they applied engineering concepts to the problems of maximizing efficiency in industrial organizations. Workers were seen as being motivated by economic rewards, and the organization was characterized by a clearly defined division of labor with highly specialized personnel, a distinct hierarchy of authority and the complete subjugation of the worker to the needs of the formal organization and the requirements of management. Organizational success was judged solely in terms of technical efficiency and productivity, producing an image of a corporate structure that has been aptly characterized by Bennis as "organizations without people."

The Human Relations school, typified by the Hawthorn Studies of Mayo and his associates, had its origins in classical management problems. However, this approach utilized socio-psychological insights in order to explain patterns of motivation and social interactions in the factory, and was a reaction to the classical approach. This approach emphasized the emotional,

unplanned, non-rational elements in organizational behavior and discovered the significance of friendship and social groupings of workers as being of central importance to the organization. They pointed out that workers have many needs other than purely economic ones and suggested ways in which management could increase worker satisfaction by paying attention to non-economic, social and cultural needs of workers such as better working conditions, more say in task achievement, and more involvement with objectives. In the same way as "Classical Theory" emphasized organizational efficiency at the expense of the worker, so the "Human Relations" school emphasized the concept of the informal organization and worker contentment at the expense of the needs of the formal organization.

The Structuralist group provided a synthesis of these two approaches. The scope of this approach was much broader than the previous approaches in terms of the kind of organizations covered and the kinds of backgrounds taken into account. They drew mainly on the work of Karl Marx and Max Weber's formulation of the ideal type bureaucracy, based on sociological concepts and the comparative method. The Structuralists first recognized fully the organizational dilemma, well stated by Etzioni as being,

. . . the inevitable strains which can be reduced but not eliminated--between organizational needs and personal needs; between rationality and non-rationality; between discipline and autonomy; between management and workers; or more generally between ranks and divisions.²

This theme has occurred repeatedly throughout the literature over the past 35 years and is seen as the current state of organizational theory. Many writers have pondered the question of, "What are the purposes of the

²A. Etzioni, Modern Organizations (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1964), p. 41.

organization?", and a fairly high degree of consensus has emerged. Space will not permit a summary³ of the research over the period and thus only several examples have been selected by the writer to illustrate the point, viz. Getzels and Guba, McGregor, Likert and Argyris.

Getzels and Guba⁴ formulated a social-process model of behavior which illustrates the duality of interrelated purposes of the organization. The administrator's task is that of emphasizing equally and integrating the nomothetic dimension (task achievement) and the idiographic dimension (needs-satisfaction) to produce behavior which is organizationally useful as well as individually satisfying, to help achieve organizational goals. McGregor⁵ postulated a "Theory X" and a "Theory Y" to show that workers could become deeply involved in, and have positive commitment to organizational goals.

Likert⁶ formulated a "principle of supportive relationships" to build and maintain a sense of "personal worth and importance" in all relationships and interactions with the organization, designed to achieve its goals. Similarly Argyris⁷ assumed that organizational behavior developed from the interactions of the individual and the formal organization. He believed that there was an inherent incongruency between the individual and the

³See pages 143-148, D. F. Griffiths, ed., Behavioral Science and Educational Administration (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

⁴J. W. Getzels, J. M. Lippman and R. F. Campbell, Educational Administration as a Social Process (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

⁵D. McGregor, The Human Side of Enterprise (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960).

⁶R. Likert, New Patterns of Management (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961).

⁷C. Argyris, Personality and Organization (New York: Harper, 1957); and C. Argyris, Integrating the Individual and the Organization (New York: Wiley, 1964).

formal organization. He believed that there was an inherent incongruency between the individual and the organization, which created a situation of conflict, frustration and failure for participants. He saw the need for all workers to feel a sense of competence through a positive growth towards self-awareness and self-esteem. This can only be achieved by enabling the worker to perceive a connection between himself (needs satisfaction) and organizational objectives (task achievement).

In short then, these three perspectives on organization have been converging and this has led to the construction of a number of general theories of organization, which occupy some common ground but have different theoretical orientations. Pugh⁸ has provided a useful categorization of these schools of thought and outlines six approaches: management theory, structural theory, group theory, individual theory, technology theory and economic theory. Some writers, such as Lawrence and Lorsch,⁹ attribute the differences to the analysts own experiences in organizations; others link them to variations in training and discipline. Hoyle has described this current thinking as the "conceptual stage" of organizational theory which is characterized by the search for "an encompassing theory, unifying concepts and an effort to relate pertinent data comprehensively to organizational design, function and adaptability."¹⁰

Perhaps the most general current approach to a theory of organization has come through the application of the concepts of general systems theory,

⁸Pugh, op. cit.

⁹P. R. Lawrence and J. W. Lorsch, Organization and Environment (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 159-184.

¹⁰E. Hoyle, "Organizational Analyses in the Field of Education," Education Research, 7:2 (1965), 97.

games theory, information theory and cybernetics. As Pugh claims, "Organization theory itself is a growth point at the present time in the social sciences. In particular, the attempt to draw from all the approaches here mentioned, and interrelate them, is proving to have considerable potential."¹¹ The systems model in particular seems to be finding increasing favor amongst theorists.¹² Yet, emerging from these attempts to delineate the field, there seems to be a further perspective, different from but related to the present stage.

3. EMERGING TRENDS IN ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY

This fourth stage of conceptualization seems to be characterized by a number of separate but related ideas and this was evident in a number of books which were consulted.¹³ Even though they cover a wide range of thought about organizations, there is an unexpected degree of agreement amongst their authors with regard to both the developmental trends in organizational theory and the place which their discipline holds in the

¹¹Pugh, op. cit.

¹²See for example: D. Katz and R. L. Kahn, The Social Psychology of Organizations (New York: Wiley, 1966), pp. 19-26; R. D. Hall, Organizations: Structure and Process (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1972), p. 25; A. Etzioni, "Two Approaches to Organizational Analysis: A Critique and a Suggestion," Administrative Science Quarterly, 5 (1960), 257-278; R. Carzo and J. N. Yanouzas, Formal Organization: A Systems Approach (New York: Irwin, Dorsey, 1967).

¹³For example: G. W. Dalton, P. R. Lawrence and J. W. Lorsch, Organizational Structure and Design (Homewood, Illinois: Irwin, 1970); R. H. Hall, Organizations: Structure and Process (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1972); P. R. Lawrence and J. W. Lorsch, Organization and Environment (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1967); J. W. Lorsch, and P. R. Lawrence, Studies in Organizational Design (Homewood, Illinois: Irwin, 1970); C. Perrow, Organizational Analysis (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, 1970); D. Silverman, The Theory of Organizations (New York: Basic Books, 1971).

behavioral sciences. This fourth phase seems to be characterized by a number of new conceptions and developments which will now be examined, drawing examples from the books which were considered.

1. Firstly there is the awareness that there may not be one correct organizational theory as such to cover all organizations but that there should be a concern to systematically analyze the processes which underly organizational behavioral phenomena rather than finding techniques within a broad framework that may help to solve specific problems in all organizations.

This theme is quite evident in the books which were consulted. Professors Lawrence and Lorsch wrote Organization and Environment (1967) with a dual perspective based on a "long standing concern for both theory and practice." They hoped to "contribute to an emerging new theory of organization" and this reviewer believes that they have made an important contribution. The basic question analyzed in this work is: What kind of organization does it take to deal with various economic and market conditions? This basic question sets the tone for the entire work. On the basis of their original study of ten firms (six in the plastic industry, two in the standardized container industry and two in the food processing industry), along with a review of six studies with diverse research orientations but very similar empirical and theoretical conclusions, the authors present a "contingency theory" of organizations using an open system model. Lawrence and Lorsch focus their attention discovering the optimum interplay between the functional departments within, and the relevant external environments outside, an organization, in order to determine what makes for high performance.

The authors strive to get across their main point: There is no one best way to organize. As they state:

In essence, much of the current organizational literature is directed at a fundamental question quite different from our

own. Instead of seeking relationships between organizational states and processes and external environmental demands, as we are doing, most organizational research and theory has implicitly, if not explicitly, focused on the one best way to organize in all situations. We believe that seeking an answer to our question --What kind of organization does it take to deal with different environment conditions?--may help to bring some order out of the current confusion about organizational theory.¹⁴

Different firms must deal with different environments, for example, a changing dynamic environment for the plastics industry; a stable, certain environment for the standard container industry; and an environment somewhat between the two for the packaged food industry. Likewise the functional departments that comprise the firms, deal with different sections of their environments; production deals with techno-economic, research with the scientific, and sales with the market sector. The sectors themselves will be marked with varying degrees of uncertainty and change. Thus there is a varying need for differentiation of structure and orientation of departments within different firms. Differentiation produces need for proper integration; integration is achieved only with proper conflict resolution processes. We have then all the important variables for a contingency theory of organizations. Performance depends on the goodness of fit of the internal variables with the environmental variables and on the proper mechanisms of conflict resolution to integrate the necessary differentiation. The researchers quantify all the variables, present their arguments convincingly, and amass solid evidence which not only fits with their own conclusions, but also falls squarely within the concerns of much contemporary organization theory.

¹⁴ Lawrence and Lorsch, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

An interesting facet of the theoretical discussion in this book involves the long-standing non-dialogue between advocates of the "Classical" and the "Human Relations" theories of organization. The authors essentially say that neither approach is correct based on the considerations discussed above. In adopting what is essentially a sociology of knowledge stance in regard to these theories, the authors note that the developers of the Classical approach themselves had backgrounds in organizations with very stable environments. Their one best way to organize is appropriate in such organizations; as the case of the container firm attests. The Human Relations school, on the other hand, emerged during a period of uncertainty in the environment and from individuals whose own experience was in organizations which faced uncertainty. Their one best way to organize, similarly, is appropriate under certain conditions. Thus neither approach is refuted, but neither is accepted in the manner which is customary. As they state:

Our findings have led us to believe that both of the traditional theories might now be subsumed under a broader theory that is gradually taking form in the recent literature--what we are calling a contingency theory of organizations. We would hesitate to make such an assertion if we did not see a number of recent studies conducted by others that tend generally to support our conclusions.¹⁵

One would hope that studies as this will end forever the advocacy of particular organizational models at the expense of all other approaches. The findings clearly suggest that there is no one best way to organize for maximum effectiveness. As the total society moves in the direction of greater emphasis on technological development and as new markets emerge as strong environmental influences, a shift toward the more differentiated organizational model can be predicted. While this model proves to be

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 184.

effective in the present circumstances it cannot be taken as the model for the future. Changes in the environment and within organizations undoubtedly will lead to new ways to organize for effectiveness.

Perrow's¹⁶ suggestions regarding a framework for organizational analysis are directly in line with the findings of this study. His book, Organizational Analysis, represents a sociological analysis of organizational phenomenon. Perrow's primary argument is that the behavior of organizations and of individuals within organizations can best be understood and influenced by taking a macrosociological perspective. He is making an explicit attempt to balance what he sees as the predominance of psychological and social psychological orientations towards organizational behavior. The book focuses on the concepts of structure, technology, environment and goals as the primary conceptual tools useful in understanding and changing organizations. Perrow also suggests that a significant defect of many approaches has been their attempt to develop propositions that apply to all organizations when in fact there is so much diversity among them. As he states:

Can there be one theory of organization or should there be many theories of organization? . . . The natural science model demands that our theories be generally applicable. This rigidity has performed a dis-service to organizational theory. It has prevented us from recognizing that there are various types of organizations and thus that we may legitimately have theories that only apply to some types and not to others. We recognize that most generalizations that are applicable to all organizations are too obvious or too general, to be of much use for specific predictions. . . . One of the dominant themes of this book will be that today organizations come in great variety and that organization theory must be varied to be useful.¹⁷

¹⁶ C. Perrow, "A Framework for the Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations," American Sociological Review, 32 (April, 1967), pp. 194-208.

¹⁷ C. Perrow, Organizational Analysis: A Sociological View (London: Tavistock, 1972), pp. 18-19.

Another example of this view is Silverman¹⁸ who suggests that the study of organizations has a "pattern" and so concern should be with broadening our knowledge of this "pattern" rather than evolving a "theory." Organization theory is thus happily moving away from the search for the one best model. In short, as the study of organizations grows in stature as a discipline and sophistication, then there follows a movement, similar to that seen in the development of the established behavioral sciences, away from observation and theory towards applied research.

The research findings from Organization and Environment were the basis for the continuing work and application in Organization Structure and Design and in Studies in Organizational Design. In the former book, Dalton, Lawrence and Lorsch concentrate on problems of building or adapting organizations to perform new tasks or to meet new challenges and use eighteen case studies and four readings, which center on the problems of obtaining a fit between an organization and the tasks it performs.

This book begins with a summary of the basic research in Organization and Environment and uses this comprehensive analytic framework and concepts as the model for working on structural design problems. As they state:

To summarize then, the Lawrence and Lorsch study provides a set of research findings and concepts which enable us to understand what characteristics an organization must have to be effective in a particular set of environmental circumstances. This study directs our attention to the environmental demands placed on the organization in terms of the degree of differentiation, the pattern and degree of integration, integrative mechanisms and conflict management behavior.¹⁹

¹⁸ D. Silverman, The Theory of Organizations (London: Heinemann, 1970).

¹⁹ G. W. Dalton, P. R. Lawrence, and J. W. Lorsch, Organizational Structure and Design (Homewood, Illinois: Irwin Dorsey, 1970), p. 12.

They then apply these ideas to working out specific structure designs--thus this is a piece of applied research, in line with their contingency theory of organizations.

The purpose of Lorsch's and Lawrence's book, Studies in Organizational Design, is to further extend the research initiated with their previous findings reported in Organization and Environment. As they state:

The purpose of this volume, then, is to bring to the attention of practicing managers and students of administration these three trends--toward a contingency theory of organization, toward studying organizations as systems, and toward applied research. They are the central themes which intellectually bind the chapters of this book together.²⁰

They use the concepts from their earlier studies review and extend them, and show how the new findings relate to the original ideas. Of the ten studies reported in the book, three give an overview of the full set of concepts, two concentrate on differentiation, four major on integrative devices and one relates the concepts of differentiation and integration to the human personality. Thus, we can see from the above that this first theme is well represented in the books consulted.

As the work by Lawrence and Lorsch has been the basis of much of this discussion, it may be of value in concluding this section to briefly examine some of the shortcomings of their work. The first such shortcoming is the manner in which the concept of environment is handled. The authors do not make the distinction between the organization and its environment clear. On the one hand, it is pressure from the market. On the other, it is the state of the technological art. If an organization is a bounded entity, the points of entrance of environmental pressures should be made more

²⁰ J. W. Lorsch and P. R. Lawrence, Studies in Organizational Design (Homewood, Illinois: Irwin Dorsey, 1970), p. 2.

explicit. If the organization is an open system, then the strength and direction of inputs from the total environment should be considered. The authors provided no information on the mechanisms by which these environmental influences enter the organization. The problem is not, of course, limited to just this study. While this work does take the idea of environmental influences out of the realm of discussion and into the realm of research, they have not solved the problem of conceptualization and measurement. While it seems reasonable that differentiation is a consequence of environmental influences, the writer is unconvinced by the data presented that other factors might not also be operative. The differentiated plastic firms, for example could be highly differentiated simply because of the kinds of people hired into the different departments of the firms in the industry. While this is itself an environmental factor and may not be a very plausible argument, the concept of environmental pressures, as used in this study, is not as precise as it should be. The ideas seem reasonable, but their demonstration is not yet at a desirable level.

This lack of clarity in regard to the environment issue is related to another shortcoming of the study. While the authors deliberately and correctly choose to concentrate on only a few variables, they essentially ignore the possibility that others may enter the system and affect their findings. Other environmental pressures, original differences in structures among the organizations studied, historical factors and intra-industry variations in orientation and practice are largely ignored. While no single study can control for all possible intervening influences, the authors should at least have given greater consideration to the possible influence of other factors.

A further criticism is that the authors do not attempt to generalize their findings beyond the industrial sphere. While this criticism is unfair since the authors state that they do not wish to do so and the data are only from industry, the implications of the findings and interpretations thereof appear to be of real significance for all organizations and all organizational analysts. Since the organizations studied did vary according to environmental pressures and responded differentially to these pressures, the same kinds of reactions for non-industrial organizations could at least be predicted. While the burden of demonstrating the relevance of these findings for other organizational forms is not on the authors, it is their responsibility to push organizational theory forward. This they have done admirably within one segment of the total. They should have attempted the next step also. In all fairness to them, their later books report the application of their research in many different organizations, although unfortunately still of one type, viz. business. They do state,²¹ however, that further studies are in process and also suggest other areas of future research and research application.

The final criticism is related to the number of cases studied. A case study is a case study and therefore these research findings are limited if one is interested in a general theory of organizations. Lawrence and Lorsch go some important steps beyond this but essentially they base their arguments on the comparisons of one high-performing with one low-performing firm in three industries ("pre-testing" in six plastic firms). And, as the authors readily admit, the test of the theory is yet to come. A less minor and more bewildering question arises from the six tables in Chapter 5, all

²¹Ibid., pp. 14-15.

which report significance levels. The writer leaves it to the statisticians to decide if one can compute significance levels with a sample of two cases. Traditionally, "Human Relation" theorists have studied the behavior of individuals in the context of organizations; and as Mouzelis²² noted the transition to a truly organizational focus has not been easy. Perhaps the case base for these tables is all the respondents in each firm (the N's are not reported). But in that case, the unit of analysis is the individual managers and not the organization or departments as a whole, as the text and theory clearly state.

This methodological confusion detracts only slightly from the real arguments presented in the book. The organizations stand on the basis of their "case studies" and the growing evidence supplied by the many other researchers cited. But it does make clear that the hard work "toward a contingency theory of organizations" is just beginning. If the theory lives up to half the utopian expectations discussed in the final chapter, it will have been a milestone in organizational studies; even now it is an important contribution.

2. The second theme is concerned with the realization that the Behavioral Sciences are the important basis for studying complex organizational behavior and processes.

During the '40's behavioral scientists were increasingly attracted to organizational studies through their specialized knowledge of human behavior, their research methods and theoretical concepts which gave them keen insights as to what to look for in organizational behavior. Herbert Simon's book, Administrative Behavior (1945) is a good example of how

²² N. P. Mouzelis, Organization and Bureaucracy: An Analysis of Modern Theories (Chicago: Aldine, 1968).

scholars began to advance knowledge in this field. This was an attempt to develop a set of tools--a set of concepts and a vocabulary suitable for describing an organization. He relied on the behavioral sciences to explain organizations and behavior of people in them. This trend continued in the post-war years and a great number of behavioral scientists turned to the study of organizations and their administration. So a new approach developed and administration was looked upon as being very much involved in the behavior of people in organizational settings. An example of this is the joining of behavioral science and educational administration together in the 63rd Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education. In that book, the contributions of many behavioral scientists are noted and one major theme was that: "Administration is susceptible to empirical research using the tools of the behavioral scientist."²³

This trend is evident in the books under review in that the study of organizations was thought to be incompatible with the natural sciences and there was the recognition that environment has such an important influence on organizations through its inputs.

Silverman²⁴ is the best example of the first point as he approaches the study of organizations from a sociological viewpoint. The greater part of his book consists of a review and critical analysis of the various models and theories which constitute present day studies in organizational theory. He attempts to marshal the incompatibilities between the various theories advanced and by analyzing these differences to develop a new sociological

²³D. E. Griffiths, ed., Behavioral Science and Educational Administration, The 63rd Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 2.

²⁴Silverman, op. cit.

approach for theoretical research which may result in a theory or organizations more in accordance with the practical operation of organizations.

After analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches to the subject, Silverman expands upon a suggestion made by Parsons which Parsons calls "the action frame of reference." Silverman makes a number of important assertions in support of this method. He points out that social sciences and natural sciences deal with entirely different subject matters. Consequently if a social system obeys the laws of natural science, it is more a matter of coincidence than of correlation; sociology is concerned with understanding action rather than behavior. It is possible, and in many cases probable, that the action taken by an organization or individual results from a quite erroneous interpretation of the situation.

We are less concerned with logic than with communication and understanding. Another principle is that man shapes society. It is the consensus of men as a group which establishes society and since the participants as well as conditions are changing, society is in a state of change. Related to this concept is the fact that men transform social meanings over time. In one period society will accept actions by groups or individuals which in another period are quite unacceptable. Therefore, the actions of society cannot be predicted from past history. Explanation of human action depends upon the social meanings assigned to the acts of men by both society and the individual. As Silverman says,

In emphasizing that action derives from the meanings that men attach to their own and each other's acts, the Action frame of reference argues that man is constrained by the way in which he socially constructs his reality.²⁵

²⁵ Ibid., p. 141.

Silverman suggests that future research should be directed towards determination of the reason for action taken as seen by the actor and not for reasons ascribed to the situation by society or other non-participating individuals.

This, of course, emphasizes the fact that human action is determined largely by role--perception and needs of the moment rather than some pre-ordained drive or internal standard reaction. Consequently, as social interaction is a subset of organizations, then they also must be studied from a behavioral science point of view, free from the narrow interpretations of the natural sciences. This is a narrow theoretical issue but of great importance in developing a behavioral science application in the study of complex organizations.

The importance of the influence of Environment on organizations was an important theme amongst the books being reviewed and a further illustration that Organizational theory is a part of the behavioral sciences. This was a very important concept in Lawrence and Lorsch's contingency theory as they viewed the study of organizations "as systems of variables interacting with their environment."²⁶ So the relationship between an organization and its environment is the basic contingent relationship on which their work is focused (Environment refers to demands made upon differing segments of the organization from outside the organization). Lawrence and Lorsch,²⁷ in their earlier work, also strongly suggest that the way an organization is organized, is affected by the environmental and technological factors under discussion.

²⁶ Lorsch and Lawrence, op. cit., p. 1.

²⁷ Lawrence and Lorsch, op. cit., p. 157.

This view was also evident in several of the other books being reviewed. For example, in Structure and Process, Hall emphasizes environment as the most important source of variation in structure, with a prominent place reserved for technology, structural variables being seen as constraints on individual behavior. It is Silverman's view that the pattern of organizational study is related to the fact that "the larger interests of contemporary writers has led to a new focus upon the manner in which organization and environment are related."²⁸ Perrow examines the way an organization is affected by its environment and using a systems approach, considers such things as the impact of new sources of personnel recruitment on structure and values of the organization, and the role of technology in changing the structure and goals of the organization. The concept of environment is treated in a descriptive, insightful manner.

Environment is characterized along six dimensions:

- (1) The concept of organizational legitimacy.
- (2) The role of co-optation in neutralizing and utilizing a perceived threat from the environment.
- (3) The regional environment.
- (4) The international cultural environment.
- (5) The role of culturally bound beliefs in limiting managerial strategies.
- (6) The role of other organizations in the environment.

Therefore, he suggests that there is a close interrelationship between organizations and their environments, each influencing the other. However, as Hall²⁹ claims, there is no solid evidence on which to form conclusions

²⁸ Silverman, op. cit., p. 3.

²⁹ Hall, op. cit., p. 324.

regarding the relative strengths of the general and specific environmental factors as they affect organizations.

Organizational behavior is essentially social behavior and therefore can only be measured from a behavioral science perspective, the rules of natural science having little relevance to the complex interaction between an organization and its environment and the resultant behavior produced. Consequently, the theme "Environment" is illustrative of the behavioral science approach to studying complex organizations, and shows the limitations of more simplistic approaches as mentioned above.

3. The next theme is related to the fact that Organizational Theory views human beings in organizations in a very different way than previously--the complexity of organizational processes are being put into proper perspective.

In the Classical School, Man was viewed as an inert instrument performing assigned tasks, little thought being given to motivation, individual differences, attributes of Man, etc. The Human Relations School viewed man in context of the group and practical administration was characterized by an emphasis upon human relations, group dynamics and permissiveness. The Structuralists wanted personal involvement and the fusing together of organizational and individual goals.

The present view takes a more complete view of man: intellectual, motivational, perceptual and emotional. A number of key concepts seem to be presently important:

- (a) Organizational structure is viewed as an important influence in shaping behavior.
- (b) Conflict plays an important role within an organization and outside of it. Particularly, the conflict an organization member faces with roles he plays in his work organization and in other organizations.
- (c) The values of organization members are considered as variables which condition organizational behavior.

- (d) The informal group to which a person belongs has an important effect upon goal attainment.

Space will only permit the consideration of (a) and (b) as these are considered at length in some of the books which were consulted.

(a) Organizational Structure

This view is strongly supported by Perrow³⁰ who has taken a sociological structural view as a more economical approach to organizational change and problem solving. He demonstrates that the key to changing behavior is designing and management of the structure because the behavior evolved by structural devices is reinforced daily and becomes part of the stable expectations of employees.

Hall's book has two major sections on "structure" and "process." The difference between them is a good deal less clear than one might wish. Most of the material concerns change within the organization and has a distinctly structural flavor as is evidenced by his concluding remarks on structure which lend support to assertion (a), viz.

The analysis of organizational structure can be, and often is, somewhat dry and unnecessarily static; but it is vital for understanding what goes on in an organization, for behavior is an out growth of structure.³¹

(b) Conflict

To Lawrence and Lorsch, the resolution of conflict is a major organizational task. The analysis of the conflict resolution process is a major contribution of this approach. The authors do not suggest that there is one best form of such approach. Rather they provide evidence that conflict

³⁰ Perrow, op. cit., pp. 175-176.

³¹ Hall, op. cit., p. 199.

resolution processes vary according to the specific conflict situations which are faced in a particular form of organization. The trend in organizational thought seems to be towards using the conflict situation to improve task achievement rather than ignoring it and hoping that it will go away. Thus the peace making role of administrators is no longer seen as being valid. Instead, the conflict situation must be brought out into the open and confronted. Silverman³² refers to this when he distinguishes between "organized conflict" and unorganized conflict." Hall³³ believes that confrontation in a conflict situation may lead to a more open communications and cooperation among participants. Hence, conflict is becoming increasingly accepted as a very important and necessary part of organizational life; as Hall so aptly states:

Conflict . . . is not inherently good or bad for the participants, the organization, or the under society. . . . Power and conflict are major shapers of the state of an organization. A given organizational state sets the stage for the continuing power and conflict processes, thus continually reshaping the organization.³⁴

4. The final theme that the writer wishes to relate the books to, is the applicability of Weber's bureaucratic structure as the ideal-type organization.

Weber's concept of bureaucracy and the assumption that bureaucratic structures possess certain qualities, does not in fact characterize such structures in the real world. Firstly, let us consider the assumption of rationality of modern organizations. Despite attempts within complex organizations to structure and impersonalize relations so that individual personalities will have little or no effect on the accomplishment of organization

³² Silverman, op. cit., pp. 206-208.

³³ Hall, op. cit., p. 238.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 240.

goals, no organization can be completely rational. There are many reasons for this, e.g. the individual differences of participants and their interaction outside of formally assigned roles; the fact that the formal and informal structure of the organization are affected by pressure from the environment in which the institution exists, the historical perspective with which a person both within and without the organization regard the goals of the organization and the methods used to accomplish those goals, will have a decided effect upon the organization; in attempting to structure and predict behavior by rules, the ground work is laid for dysfunction within the organization.³⁵

Secondly, Weber's ideal type, i.e. the existence of a single bureaucratic form, cannot be applied directly to the analysis of empirical data, e.g. it does not account for the existence of informal groups. Page demonstrates that the intent of official naval bureaucracy is frequently modified by the personal qualities of those in it.³⁶ Nor does Weber account for the development of sub-units which pursue their own goals at the expense of the organization's goals. Weber's bureaucratic form is an ideal type whereas Hall states that organizations are on a continua and display Weber's bureaucratic dimensions to differing degrees.³⁷ Also, Weber's approach does not account for the development of professional groups within modern organizations or allow for professional principles to be practiced. So,

³⁵ J. G. Anderson, "Bureaucratic Rules: Bearers of Organizational Authority," Educational Administration Quarterly, 2:1 (Winter, 1966), 7-34; R. K. Merton, "Bureaucratic Structure and Personality," Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1957), pp. 195-206.

³⁶ C. H. Page, "Bureaucracy's Other Face," Social Forces, 25, pp. 88-94.

³⁷ R. H. Hall, "Intraorganizational Structural Variation: Application of the Bureaucratic Model," Administrative Science Quarterly, 1962, pp. 293-308.

clearly Weber's formulation does not completely describe modern organizations, because he ignores the psychological elements, the goals of individuals, informal groups and the influences of larger society.

In the books under review, Lawrence and Lorsch and Silverman attack bureaucracy principally from the viewpoint of its pyramidal structure. Also, Perrow claims that "most social scientists who write about organizations show a decided preference for the non-bureaucratic model and some hold it to be the only viable model for today's world."³⁸ Unfortunately, a non-bureaucratic organization is difficult to achieve as, "the thrust is to routinize, limit uncertainty, increase predictability and centralize functions and controls."³⁹ But there is still the possibility that bureaucracies may decay as further stages in organizational development are reached. It is interesting to note, in this context, the alternative proposals for structuring organizations, put forward by Lawrence and Lorsch and Silverman.

As mentioned above, Lawrence and Lorsch and their coworkers developed a contingency theory of organizations which attempts to relate environment to four dimensions of the organization--structure, goals, time and interpersonal contact.⁴⁰

Silverman's Action Theory, previously discussed, is also an alternative proposal. He criticizes the bureaucratic model and systems theory and instead believes that attention must be given to explanations of human actions, meaning being given by those concerned as actions arise not as

³⁸ Perrow, op. cit., pp. 65-66.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Lorsch and Lawrence, op. cit., p. 6.

the result of external forces but rather from the interaction of the actors themselves.⁴¹

Consequently, it is clear from the above and other writers that organizations are an evolving concept depending upon the actions of individuals, rather than on constraining forces as suggested by the Weberian approach.⁴²

Obviously, this review of organizational literature has presented difficulties as it has been difficult to give equal treatment to or a balanced view of each book concerned through limitations of space and the requirements of this paper. Hence this review of organizational theory has had to be of a limited and general nature--limited in the sense that it was done from the perspective of six books; and general because only four themes were considered. However, this was deliberate because the writer considers that these themes are the important emerging trends in organization theory. Therefore the focus of this paper has been on these new, emerging and obvious trends in organization theory, viz. the search for broad theories of organizational behavior, the application of the behavioral sciences, the new conceptions of human behavior, and the eclipse of the bureaucratic ideal.

4. APPLICATION TO ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

Hersey and Blanchard stated that ". . . management theory is important to all categories of organizations--business, government, military, education,

⁴¹Silverman, op. cit., p. 153.

⁴²See for example: D. S. Pugh, et al, "A Conceptual Scheme for Organizational Analysis," Administrative Science Quarterly, 8 (1963-4), pp. 289-315.

'voluntary' organizations such as the church, and even the home."⁴³ So organization theory will be applicable also to these kinds of organizations.

One of the problems is the application of this theory to such a wide range of organizations concerned with adult education. Knowles and Klevins identified four major types of adult education agencies:

Type I--agencies established to serve the educational needs of adults; adult education is its central function. Type II--an agency established to serve the educational needs of youth--which has assumed the added responsibility of (partially) serving the educational needs of adults; adult education is a secondary function. Type III--agencies which serve both educational and non-educational needs of the community; adult education is an added function to fulfill some of the needs which the agencies recognize as their responsibility. Type IV--agencies which serve special interests (economic, ideological) of particular groups; adult education is a subordinate function principally to further the interests of the group itself.⁴⁴

These organizations are on a continuum with adult education ranging from being a central concern to a peripheral concern. In addition the clientele has particular characteristics: they are essentially volunteers; the educational activity is secondary to other activities; they are legal adults; and quote often the education program may be marginal to the primary focus of the institution in which it is carried. Increasingly, too, clients are becoming total social systems--government agencies, corporations, school systems and communities.⁴⁵ Hence, the total organization is becoming the focus of concern and how to develop "educative environments" which facilitate

⁴³D. Hersey and K. Blanchard, Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources (3rd ed.; [Englewood Cliffs]: Prentice-Hall, 1977), p. xiv.

⁴⁴M. S. Knowles and C. Klevins, "History and Philosophy of Continuing Education," ed. C. Klevins, Materials and Methods in Continuing Education (New York: Klevins Publication, 1976), p. 16.

⁴⁵Ibid.

the growth and development of the individuals in them. Related to this is the fact, as Carlson⁴⁶ noted, that some of these organizations are "wild" and some are "domesticated" organizations. Organizations which select their clients from among volunteers are "wild" organizations because they struggle for survival, their success being largely dependent on their own performance.

So these features of adult education agencies will limit the extent to which one can apply organizational theory in a general way. In contrast, the analysis of an individual organization would allow an extensive application of these ideas. This is related to the development of contingency theory and the focus on the variables present in the particular organization and its environment. An examination of the various implications for adult education of the trends in organization theory, described earlier, now follows.

First, the value of theory itself. Someone once said: "There is nothing as practical as a good theory." Good theory is essentially practical because it shows us how to act in specific situations if we know the generality of the situation. Furthermore, good theories help to identify and clarify problems so that better theories can be built. Van Allen, in an interesting paper, claimed that one could administer without using theory but that ". . . with theory, you've reached a new step in efficiency. It provides you with a rational view of the situation and serves as a guide in the selection of principles."⁴⁷ So this is the first

⁴⁶R. O. Carlson, "Environmental Constraints and Organizational Consequences: The Public Schools and Its Clients," in D. E. Griffiths, op. cit., pp. 264-267.

⁴⁷Van Allen, "The Use of Theory," Organizational Behavior, eds. F. Carver and T. Sergiovanni (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970).

implication of these theoretical developments for adult education. An understanding of these developments will help adult educators manage their agencies better. As Getzels stated:

. . . theories without practice, like, maps without routes may be empty, but practice without theories, like routes without maps are blind. . . . So-called practical principles cannot be either meaningfully formulated or effectively applied outside a supporting conceptual framework.⁴⁸

Second, as was discussed earlier, there is no one best way to organize. Instead, in analyzing an adult education agency, the contingency model should be used. This has great potential and is a more fruitful approach because it postulates functional relationships between environmental management and performance variables.

Luthans and Stewart have proposed a contingency model which utilizes an open-systems paradigm of the organization.⁴⁹ The model identifies relevant system variables which are placed into a taxonomical hierarchy of primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Primary system variables include: the environmental suprasystem; the resource subsystem; and management subsystem. Secondary system variables derive from the interaction of subsets of the primary variables and include: situation variables; organization variables; and performance criteria. The tertiary system variables are generated by the interaction of secondary system variables and constituent primary system variables. So this has great potential for use by adult educators as an analytical tool to assess the dynamics of organizational behavior within their organizations.

⁴⁸Getzels, op. cit.

⁴⁹F. Luthans and T. Stewart, "A General Contingency Theory of Management," Academy of Management Review, April, 1977, pp. 181-195.

A third related implication is the influence of the environment on adult education agencies. Previously, adult educators did not have to come to terms with their environments. Today, educational organizations of all varieties face an increasingly hostile environment and this is a very important implication. External factors such as pressure of government legislation, reduced funds, changing social values, and greater pressure for accountability will all have their influence on adult education agencies and the way that they are organized. In some types of agencies, adult education will disappear because of limited resources; in others it will have a reduced role and function. Thus, an analysis of the environmental factors highlighted as important by recent organizational theory will enable an agency to develop strategies to survive in difficult economic situations.

A fourth implication is the importance of organizational structure in shaping behavior. Adult education agencies, like schools, have been organized as bureaucratic organizations with a network of status relationships organized in a chain of command. From the third broad trend in organizational theory, this kind of structure may be totally inappropriate for human service organizations. The key to changing behavior in these agencies is designing appropriate structures because the behavior evolved by structural devices is reinforced daily and becomes part of the stable expectations of adult educators. There has been much written in the literature about the conflict of bureaucratic expectations and professional expectations. Perhaps this conflict lies more in the structure of adult education agencies and the expectations that such a structure develops within adult educators.

A fifth implication is the role that conflict can play within these organizations. The trend in organizational thought seems to be towards using the conflict situation to improve task achievement rather than ignoring it and hoping that it will go away. Thus the peace making role of administrators is no longer seen as being valid. Instead the conflict situation must be brought out into the open and confronted. Positive use can be made of conflict. However, several widely held attitudes appear to hinder adult educators' use of organizational conflict: conflict is regarded as a sign of weakness; administrators are conflict avoiders; they also believe that conflict is the exception, not the rule; and they believe that all conflict can be resolved. Conflicts in adult education agencies should be re-examined and the methods that administrators use in dealing with them should be assessed. As long as conflict is envisioned as evidence of poor leadership, dealing with it in a constructive sense will be extremely difficult. Even if administrators refuse to deal with it, conflict will always exist in adult education agencies and exert itself in some way. The potential loss for improving effectiveness will be directly proportional to the amount of denial of the existence of conflict and the degree to which current administration practices reinforce this.

As Mattran claimed, it is necessary to identify and resolve conflict satisfactorily when they occur.⁵⁰

Sixth, a recognition of the role of values and the role of informal groups within the adult education agency have important implications for

⁵⁰K. Mattran, "Conflict Management, Organizational and Personnel Needs, Performance Evaluation" Managing Adult and Continuing Education Programs and Staff, ed. P. D. Langerman and D. H. Smith (Washington: National Association for Public Continuing Adult Education), p. 370.

goal attainment in these organizations. The informal group can be adversarial or supportive. The degree to which they can be supportive will determine whether the agency accomplishes its goals. Value clarification and involvement by all staff in formulation of agency goals will determine the degree of commitment and execution of these goals.

Last, there is a need to re-examine the bureaucratic structure of adult education agencies as being appropriate for their organization and operation. Adult education agencies are characterized generally by: an inability to define in operational durable terms their goals and objectives; they are inherently decentralized organizations; they have clients who demand a voice in decision-making; they have a growing vulnerability to the environment; and are composed principally of professional educators who demand a large amount of control over their work and its organization.

Sociologists have made a number of important general observations about professional employees: professionals demand autonomy in their work, they have divided loyalties, there are strong tensions between professional values and bureaucratic expectations in an organization, and professionals demand peer evaluation of their work.⁵¹ These characteristics have given rise to professional "communities," imply a common sense of identity, self-regulation, lifetime membership, shared values, a common language, clear social boundaries, and strong socialization of new members. All of these characteristics undercut the traditional norms of bureaucracy, rejecting its hierarchy control, structure and management procedures. As a consequence,

⁵¹ B. R. Clark, "Faculty Organization and Authority," The Study of Academic Administration, ed. T. Lunsford (Boulder: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education), pp. 37 and 51.

a distinct management style is necessary in a professional organization. Perhaps the only other resolution of this conflict between organizational structure and professional orientation is by the development of changed organizational structures based on collegial decision-making. This would certainly be most applicable to human resource development organizations such as adult education agencies.

CONCLUSIONS

This analysis of organizational theory has tried to capture some of the emerging trends. The application of these trends in organizational theory has been general in nature and limited in extent. General in nature because of the impossibility of making specific application to such a wide range of organizations; limited in extent because of the peculiar activities, clients and staff involved in adult education. The greatest potential application of organizational theory to adult education agencies will be the contingency approach because it allows the inclusion and analysis of the many situational variables and their interaction at the various organizational and environmental levels.